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SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

COTONOU FOR AMBASSADOR NEILL AND USAID DIRECTOR THOMAS
STATE FOR AS/IO HOLMES, PRM/P, AF/W AND IO/EDA BEHREND AND
KOTOK
USAID FOR DAA/DCHA GRIGSBY, DCHA/FFP LANDIS, AFR/WA
USDA/FAS FOR CHAMBLISS/TILSWORTH/GAINOR
GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR MOLEY, RMA LYNCH AND NKYLOH/USAID
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WFP BOARD APPROVES BENIN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT VALUED
AT U.S. DOLLARS (USD) 16.5 MILLION - 23,669 METRIC TONS

SUMMARY

1. The WFP Executive Board, at its first regular session (February 23-26), approved Benin's development project 10308.0 entitled Promotion of Formal and Non-Formal Education of Children and Youth. The project is for five years (July 2004-June 2009), with a total cost to WFP of USD 16.5 million, and a cost to Government of USD 1.27 million. Beneficiaries are estimated at 68,300 (of whom 32,800 are girls). Over the life-of-project, WFP will supply (subject to the availability of funds) a total of 23,669 metric tons of food aid.

Background

2. Benin (ex-Dahomey, with a population of approximately 7 million) is one of the least developed countries (LDCs) in the world, given its limited natural resources and a poorly developed infrastructure. In March 2003, the World Bank and the IMF agreed to support a debt reduction package for Benin under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Debt relief under HIC amounts to approximately USD 460 million. Beni received USD 27.1 million in 2002 and was slated to receive USD 32.9 million in 2003. HIPC is expected to reduce Benin's debt-to-export ratio, freeing up resources for education, health and other anti-poverty programs.

U.S. intervention in support of approval of WFP's Benin development project Promotion of Formal and Non-Formal Education of Children and Youth

3. Herewith the essence of the supportive U.S. intervention:

-Benin is a country of hope that is putting into practice ideas of development and democracy that will ensure sustainable development for its people in the future.

-In USDEL's view, the benefits of (particularly) girl's education are well established. It is associated with a host of crucial development outcomes and can help break the poverty cycle between generations. As per UNICEF/Benin, the 50 percent primary net enrolment rate for girls shows that half of the school-age population is not in school. In addition, UNICEF concludes, the majority of those girls who do enroll, drop out of school before the end of the primary cycle. USDEL notes the clear intent of WFP and UNICEF to work together on non-formal education, and we would urge the same joint UN team effort in the primary education sector.

-WFP is encouraged to coordinate closely with USAID/Benin, that has long-standing major investments in the health and education sectors. In USDEL view, WFP and its UN sister Agencies have a key advocacy role to play in the eradication of child labor and child trafficking in the region.

Support to WFP's development portfolio in Benin

4. The U.S. has provided USD 1.72 million in developmental food assistance through WFP in support of its ongoing "Development of Primary Education and Support to Girls Education" (Benin 10094.0). Japan has provided USD 1.34 million, and Germany, USD 1.27 million. Finland, Norway,

Denmark, Italy and Australia have also contributed.

Executive Board approval

15. The WFP Board approved Benin development project 10308.0 entitled Promotion of Formal and Non-Formal Education of Children and Youth. The project is for five years (July 2004-end June 2009), with a total cost to WFP of USD 16.5 million, and a cost to Government of USD 1.27 million. Beneficiaries are estimated at 68,300 (of whom 32,800 are girls). Over the life-of-project, WFP will supply (subject to the availability of funds) a total of 23,669 metric tons of food aid. Hall

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